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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at North Carolina State University in the Spring of 1975 to investigate the relationship between residence hall proximity to foreign students and the following variables for American students: international attitudes, international activities, and interaction with foreign students. Of the 508 American students who participated in the project, 251 comprised the "non-proximity group" (those who did not live near a foreign student), and 257 comprised the "proximity group." The proximity group was divided into those who roomed with foreign students and those who lived near but did not room with foreign students. There was no significant relationship between proximity and international attitudes. American students in the proximity group interacted with foreign students to a significantly greater degree than did those in the non-proximity group. American students who roomed with foreign students were involved in a significantly greater number of international activities than either those in the non-proximity group or those in the proximity group who did not room with foreign students. An additional finding was that, regardless of proximity, there was a significant correlation between interaction with foreign students and international activities. Also, there was a significant correlation between interaction and international attitudes for those who lived close to but not with foreign students. (Author)

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CONTACT WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS AS AN INFLUENCE ON SELECTED ATTITUDES OF AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS: RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS

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CONTACT WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS AS AN INFLUENCE ON SELECTED ATTITUDES OF AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS: RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between residence hall proximity to foreign students and the following variables for American students attending North Carolina State University (NCSU):

a. International attitudes
b. International activities
c. Interaction with foreign students

NCSU enrolled a total of 130 undergraduate and 347 graduate foreign students in the fall of 1974, of which 35 lived with approximately 5500 American students in university residence halls.

METHOD

Sample

Two groups of American students were selected for the study. The first group, called proximity (N=257) was composed of all students in "long-corridor halls" who lived next to or across from a foreign student during the fall, 1974 semester and those who lived in the same suite with a foreign student in "suite halls." The proximity group was further divided into two categories called roommate (N=27), composed of American students who roomed with a foreign student; and non-roommate (N=230) composed of all others who did not room with a foreign student.

The second group was called non-proximity and was composed of 251 American students selected by the systematic sampling procedure from students who lived in sections of residence halls which were not in proximity to foreign students, i.e., different floors in the "suite halls" or different sections of the same floor in "long corridor halls."

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected by a questionnaire (attached) which was developed by the authors to measure international attitudes, international activities, interaction with foreign students, and amount of foreign travel. A more detailed description of the measurement of these variables is presented in a subsequent section. Residence hall staff members distributed the questionnaires to the rooms of students selected for the study during the first half of the spring, 1975 semester and collected them during the following week. Background data used in the study (sex, classification, residency, and school of study) were collected from existing computerized university data files.

Response Rates

Usable questionnaires were returned by the following percentages of each group:

Proximity	59.5%
Roommate	70.4%
Non-roommate	58.3%
Non-proximity	63.7%

Measurement and Classification of Variables

Internationalism Scale

Questions A thru R on the second page of the questionnaire were used to measure international attitude. Responses to each item on a five point scale from "Disagree very much" to "Agree very much" were added for each respondent. The internationalism scale thus produced could range from 18 to 90. A low score on this scale represents a nationalistic attitude and a high score represents an internationalistic attitude. Students not completing all items used for this scale were not included in the data analyses.

Index of International Activities

Questions A thru G on the lower half of the first page of the questionnaire were used to measure international activities. Individual responses to each of these questions were categorized into a four-point scale ranging from no activity to very high activity. (Cutting points used to categorize responses varied for each question and are available from the authors). Categorized responses for these seven questions were combined to produce a final Index of International Activity score which could range from zero to 21.

Index of Interaction with Foreign Students

The first two and last two questions on the first page of the questionnaire were used to measure interaction with foreign students. As with the previously described index, individual responses were categorized into a four-point scale and then combined to produce an Index of Interaction with Foreign Students score which could range from zero to sixteen.

Foreign Travel

Item C on the top half of the first page of the questionnaire was used to measure foreign travel. Responses indicating travel to three or more countries were combined into one category for data analyses.

FINDINGS

Relationships of major concern are shown in Table 1. Mean scores on the Internationalism Scale were essentially the same for each of the comparison groups. The total proximity group had a mean of 47.5 compared to 48.3 for the non-proximity group. Within the proximity group, roommates were not different from non-roommates. Thus, there does not seem to be a relationship between residence hall proximity to a foreign student

and international attitude as measured by this scale. Of interest also is the fact that American students at NCSU tend to report a more nationalistic than internationalistic attitude since they are below the midpoint for this variable.

The next part of Table 1 presents mean scores for Index of International Activities. Roommates had a mean of 5.5 which is statistically higher than the mean of 3.7 for non-roommates. No other comparisons on this index were significantly different. Mean scores on the total proximity group (3.9) and non-proximity group (4.2) were approximately equal. This indicates that residence hall proximity to a foreign student is not related to international activities unless the proximity involves rooming with a foreign student. Again of interest is the relatively low level of international activity by all groups except roommates.

Group comparisons on the Index of Interaction with Foreign Students is shown in the final section of Table 1. Proximity to a foreign student is highly related to this variable as might be expected. Foreign student roommates had a mean score of 7.3 which is significantly higher than the mean for both non-roommate (5.6) and the non-proximity group (3.5). The non-roommate mean is also significantly higher than the non-proximity mean. Thus, the closer the proximity, the greater the interaction. In the case of this variable, interaction by roommates is relatively high and, for the non-roommate group, corresponds to the midpoint of the range.

Differences in Table 1 were tested for significance using a t-test for independent groups at the .05 level of significance.

Since interaction was found to be related to proximity, it was also of interest to look at the relationship between interaction and both the Internationalism Scale and the Index of International Activities. These relationships, with proximity controlled, are shown in Table 2. For both

the non-roommate and the total proximity group, single order correlation coefficients between Index of Interaction with Foreign Students and both the Internationalism Scale and the Index of International Activities were significently different from zero. For non-proximity students, the interaction-activity relationship is significant. None of these significant correlation coefficients are particularly high, however, i.e., one variable accounts for a very small proportion of the variance in the other variable. Thus, regardless of proximity, interaction with Foreign students has a moderate relationship to international activities, while interaction is slightly related to internationalism for those who live close to, but not with a foreign student.

Final analyses for the study were made to determine the relationship of selected background variables to interaction with foreign students. For example, do freshmen report higher or lower interaction than seniors. Table 3 includes a summary of these comparisons. In each section of this table, comparisons have been made between the categories within each proximity group. Comparisons by student classification indicate that sophomores in the proximity group are significantly lower on the Interaction Index than are proximity seniors. No other significant differences were found by classification.

Similar results were found for the next three background variables. There is no significant difference between males and females, between students with different levels of foreign travel, or between in and out-of-state residents on the Index of Interaction. On the final background variable, students studying Forestry who do not live near a foreign student reported a lower level of interaction than students in all other schools except Education, Engineering, and Liberal Arts. Differences in this table were again tested for significance using a t-test for independent groups at the .05 level of significance.

Thus, with the exceptions previously noted, it appears that student classification, sex, foreign travel, residency, and school of study are not related to interaction with foreign students. Residence Hall proximity is a much better indication of whether or not interaction takes place as indicated by the substantial differences between the mean interaction scores of proximity and the non-proximity group within each category of each background variable.

CONCLUSIONS

Relationships found in this study indicate that residence hall proximity may play an important role in interaction with foreign students and possibly in the level of international activities. In order to determine whether or not interaction and international activities result from proximity, a more appropriately designed study to include measures of change over time and a comparison of students who do and who do not choose to live near a foreign student needs to be made. This preliminary investigation indicates that this type of further study would provide important implications for residence hall assignment policies regarding foreign students.

TABLE 1

MEAN SCORES ON INTERNATIONALISM SCALE, INDEX OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES, AND INDEX OF INTERACTION WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS, BY PROXIMITY

	Internationalism Scale	Index of International Activities	Index of Interaction with Foreign Students
Proximity			
Roommate *(N=19)*	47.8	5.5[a]	7.3[b]
Non-roommate *(N=134)*	47.5	3.7	5.6[c]
Total *(N=153)*	47.5	3.9	5.8[c]
Non-proximity *(N=160)*	48.3	4.2	3.5
Variable Range	18-90	0-21	0-12
Midpoint	54.0	10.5	6.0

[a]Significantly different from non-roommates at .05 level of significance.

[b]Significantly different from non-roommates and non-proximity at .05 level of significance.

[c]Significiantly different from non-proximity at .05 level of significance.

TABLE 2

SINGLE ORDER CORRELATIONS BETWEEN INDEX OF INTERACTION WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS AND BOTH INTERNATIONALISM SCALE AND INDEX OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES, BY PROXIMITY

	Proximity			
	Roommate	Non Roommate	Total	Non - Proximity
Internationalism Scale	.05	.20*	.17*	.08
Index of International Activities	.27	.27*	.30*	.35*
N =	*19*	*134*	*153*	*160*

*Significantly different from zero at .05 level of significance.

TABLE 3

MEAN INDEX OF INTERACTION SCORES, BY PROXIMITY

CLASSIFICATION	PROXIMITY	NON-PROXIMITY
Freshman	6.0 (45)	3.3 (47)
Sophomore	5.0* (40)	3.6 (41)
Junior	6.1 (33)	3.3 (34)
Senior	6.4 (34)	3.9 (28)

*Significantly different from Seniors at .05 level of significance.

SEX		
Male	5.8 (124)	3.7 (126)
Female	6.0 (29)	2.6 (24)

NUMBER OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES VISITED		
None	5.8 (111)	3.7 (10[illegible])
One	5.7 (25)	3.4 (26)
Two	5.7 (9)	2.5 (6)
Three or more	6.6 (8)	2.7 (13)

RESIDENCE		
In-state	5.7 (133)	3.5 (142)
Out-of-state	6.8 (20)	2.9 (8)

SCHOOL OF STUDY		
Ag. & Life Sciences	5.8 (35)	3.7 (29)
Design	6.0 (2)	4.8 (4)
Education	6.7 (6)	3.2 (5)
Engineering	5.5 (33)	3.5 (44)
Forestry	6.1 (15)	2.0* (17)
Liberal Arts	5.7 (36)	3.6 (22)
Physical & Math. Sci.	5.8 (18)	3.5 (14)
Textiles	6.9 (7)	4.5 (15)

*Significantly different from all schools except Education, Engineering, and Liberal Arts at the .05 level of significance.

NOTE: Numbers in parenthesis represent the numbers of scores on which the mean is based.

INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The Department of Residence Life and the Department of Student Affairs Planning and Research are conducting a research project with a selected group of students who live in the residence halls at N.C. State. The purpose of the project is to determine the attitudes and activities of this sample group of students concerning international issues.

The accuracy of the results will depend on the percentage of students who complete the questionnaire and on how accurately each student answers the questions. Therefore, please take a few minutes to answer the questions below and return the questionnaire to your Resident Advisor. Thank you for your cooperation.

_____ A. How many different foreign students have you had contact with during this academic year?

_____ B. If you have met any foreign students, how well do you know the one that you know best?
1. Not very well
2. Fairly well
3. Very well

_____ C. How many foreign countries have you visited, if any?

Please estimate the number of times during this academic year that you have done the following things:

_____ A. Discussed international relations, foreign policy, the U.N. or other international issues outside the classroom.

_____ B. Talked with others outside of the classroom about people and cultural events in other countries.

_____ C. Attended foreign movie(s).

_____ D. Read book(s) by author(s) from another country other than book(s) required for your courses.

_____ E. Attended concert(s), theater(s), or exhibitions(s) which featured the art, music, or drama of another country.

_____ F. Attended panel discussion(s), lecture(s), or other educationally-oriented program(s) on international issues other than those required for a course.

_____ G. Attended any of the International Week activities at the University Student Center which took place November 14-16. Please estimate the number of different activities that you attended.

_____ H. Had a conversation or were involved in a discussion with a foreign student.

_____ I. Went to a movie, party, concert, lecture, athletic contest, restaurant or other social, educational, recreational or entertainment event with a foreign student.

PLEASE CONTINUE ON BACK

The following statements represent many different and opposing points of view. There are no right or wrong answers and the best answer to each statement is your personal opinion. Please do not put down what you think you ought to feel, but what you do feel, and do not be especially concerned as to whether or not your opinions are "consistent."

Mark each statement in the left margin according to how much you agree or disagree with it. Please mark every one. Mark 1,2,3,4, or 5 depending on how you feel in each case.

1. Disagree very much
2. Disagree somewhat
3. No opinion
4. Agree somewhat
5. Agree very much

_____ A. In the interests of humanity, America's doors should be opened wide to immigrants from all nations and current restrictive quotas should be abolished.

_____ B. It would be a good idea if all the races were to intermarry until there was only one race in the world.

_____ C. Our country should not participate in any international organization which requires that we give up any of our national rights or freedom of action.

_____ D. It would be better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular country.

_____ E. The United States should concentrate upon keeping itself strong and should not get involved in the affairs of other countries.

_____ F. We should teach our children to uphold the welfare of all people everywhere even though it may be against the best interest of our own country.

_____ G. In the interest of permanent peace, we should be willing to settle absolutely all differences with other nations within the framework of a World Government.

_____ H. Immigrants should not be permitted to come into our country if they compete with our own workers.

_____ I. The United Nations should be strengthened by giving it control of armed forces of all the member nations.

_____ J. Only a show of military strength can prevent the Russians and Chinese Communists from trying to gain world domination.

_____ K. Our country is probably no better than many others.

_____ L. It is an idle dream to expect to abolish war.

_____ M. Our country should not cooperate in any international trade agreements which attempt to better world economic conditions at our expense.

_____ N. Any form of international government is impossible.

_____ O. A person who loves his fellow men should refuse to engage in any war, no matter how serious the consequences to his country may be.

_____ P. If an international police force is established, the United States should retain a large army and navy anyway so that we can be certain of having military forces when we need them.

_____ Q. All military training should be abolished.

_____ R. The United States should not trade with any communist country.